

MAINE CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUND COMMISSION

MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING

October 7, 2019

Augusta, Maine

A public meeting of the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund Commission ("Commission") was held on October 7, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. in Room 208 of the Burton M. Cross Office Building in Augusta, Maine. Commissioner Angela Farrell presided over the hearing with fellow Commissioners John Foster and Sara Murphy. Also present to support the Commissioners were Brenda Kielty, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Maine Attorney General, and Diana Scully, Executive Director, Maine Justice Foundation.

The purpose of the public meeting was to discuss and make funding allocations and decisions for the 2020 – 2021 funding cycle based on applications that had been submitted to the Commission by the September 6, 2019 deadline. Notice of the application process as well as notice of the meeting was published on the webpages for the Maine Justice Foundation and the State of Maine Judicial Branch. In addition, the Maine Justice Foundation sent an email to all current recipients of the fund. The Commission did site visits with the 7 current recipients during the summer of 2019. They also did a site visit with a new applicant—Catholic Charities Maine—after receiving their application and prior to the date of the public hearing.

The Commission received 7 applications from the current recipients of the fund:

Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic
Disability Rights Maine
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Legal Services for the Elderly
Maine Equal Justice Partners
Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project
Pine Tree Legal Assistance

In addition, the Commission received an application from a new applicant to the funding allocation process, Catholic Charities Maine.

Commissioner Farrell opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and introduced Commissioners Foster and Murphy. Before commencing with presentations from each of the applicants, Commissioner Farrell disclosed her status as a board member of St. Michael's Center in Bangor. Pursuant to the Rules governing the Commission, a Commissioner may not be a current member of the board of directors of an applicant. Although Commissioner Farrell's board membership is not with Catholic Charities of Maine, she chose to make a full disclosure at the start of the meeting and provide an opportunity for any objections. There were no objections.

Commissioner Farrell addressed the changes to projected funding revenue, applicant eligibility and selection criteria that resulted from legislation passed in the first regular session of the 129th Maine Legislature. P.L. 2019, ch 509 (effective September 19, 2019). Commissioner Farrell noted the projected increased allocation to the Fund of approximately \$715,000 in fiscal year 2019-2020 and \$950,000 in

fiscal year 2020-2021. Other statutory changes include requiring that nonprofit legal service provider applicants operate statewide and have 5 years of experience and that programs coordinating pro bono legal services operate statewide. Commissioner Farrell referenced the selection criteria regarding whether an applicant duplicates existing services.

Commissioner Farrell then opened the meeting to presentations by each organization in the assigned order. Catholic Charities Maine was asked to present first. The remaining applicants were asked to make their five-minute oral presentations to the Commission in alphabetical order. The following individuals gave statements and answered the Commission's questions on behalf of the organizations with which they were affiliated:

Catholic Charities Maine

Julie Allaire, Director of Strategy, Program, Business Development
Hannah DeAngelis, Director, Refugee and Immigration Services

Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic

Dmitry Bam, Interim Dean, University of Maine School of Law
Deirdre Smith, Professor and Clinic Director

Disability Rights Maine

James Clifford, President, Board of Directors
Kim Moody, Executive Director

Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project

Leslie Silverstein, President, Board of Directors
Sue Roche, Executive Director

Legal Services for the Elderly

Charles Soltan, Chair, Board of Directors
Jaye Martin, Executive Director

Maine Equal Justice

Charles Dingman, Board of Directors
Robyn Merrill, Executive Director

Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project

Juliet Holmes-Smith, Executive Director
Chris Lewis, Board of Directors

Pine Tree Legal Assistance

Nan Heald, Executive Director
Stacy Stitham, President, Board of Directors

After the completion of the presentations, Commissioner Farrell opened the meeting to any public comment. There was no public comment and the Commission commenced its deliberations. The Commission first considered the eligibility of Catholic Charities Maine. After recognizing the laudable services this applicant brings to the community, the Commission discussed whether the applicant met

the five-year requirement and whether their program qualified as free legal services. The Commission voted 3-0 to disqualify Catholic Charities Maine.

The Commission next considered whether the sliding fee scale used by the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project impacted their eligibility. The Commission voted 2-1 that the collection of such fees did not disqualify the applicant so long as the primary mission included the provision of free civil legal services and disbursements from the Fund were not used for cases in which fees were collected.

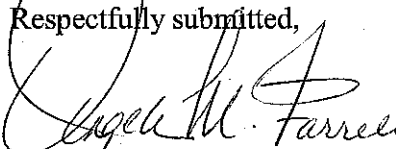
After discussing a similar issue relating to Disability Rights Maine, the Commission voted 3-0 that the collection of such fees did not disqualify the applicant so long as the primary mission included the provision of free civil legal services and disbursements from the Fund were not used for cases in which fees were collected.

The Commission turned to the selection criteria and a discussion of specific funding allocations to the remaining seven applicants. The Commission discussed rounding the percentage allocations to no more than one decimal point to simplify the calculations. Even with a potential increase in the total revenue available to the Fund, the Commission acknowledged the necessity of assigning allocations in a way that best tackled the problems plaguing the people of Maine.


The Commission asked whether anyone in the audience felt that the Commission had considered or discussed anything that was inaccurate that needed to be corrected. After hearing no responses, the Commission decided on the following allocations for the two-year funding cycle beginning January 1, 2020:

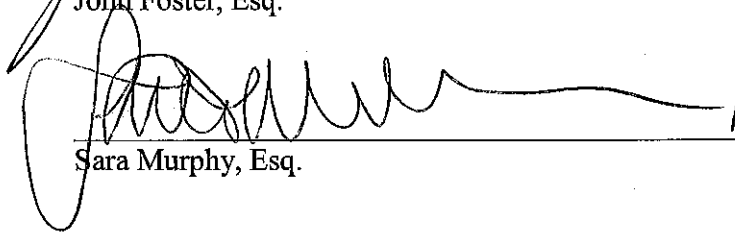
Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project	4.5%
Legal Services for the Elderly	22.0%
Pine Tree Legal Assistance	47.5%
Disability Rights Maine	3.0%
Maine Equal Justice Partners	10.5%
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project	6.0%
Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic	6.5%

Respectfully submitted,


Angela Farrell, Esq., Chair

11/25/2019


John Foster, Esq.


Sara Murphy, Esq.

12/11/2019